

**“Welcome to My
World:”**

**Music and Media in the
Graceland Experience**

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Why Graceland?

Over 600,000 visitors annually - one of the most visited homes in the country



Designated a National Historic Landmark

Visitors made surprising comments. . .

Not really being a fan, I was somewhat hesitant about this one. But I came away with respect for Elvis as an entertainer and a man. What he accomplished as both is amazing.

The tour was much more interesting and (surprisingly) emotional than I had expected.

Data Sources

On-site collection:

- **Basic demographic data and short interview questions**
- **Pre and post visit personal meaning maps**
- **170 random visitors participated over 3 days**

Online sources:

- **Visitor reviews (Trip Advisor)**
- **Visitor photos (Flickr)**

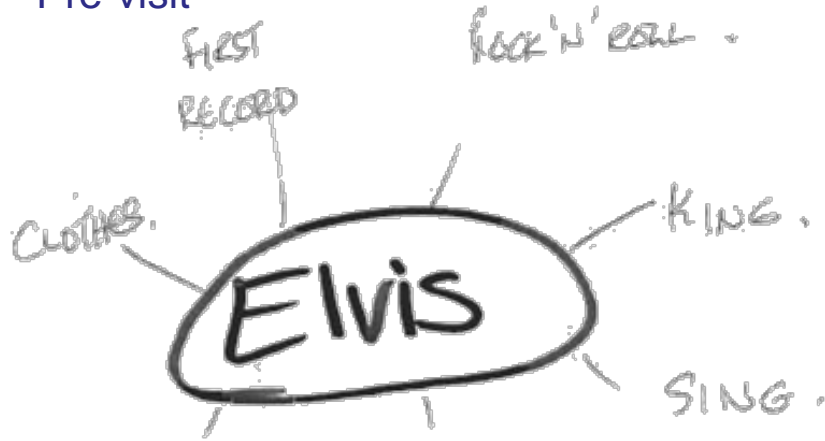
Audio tour: sound files and transcript

Who are the visitors?

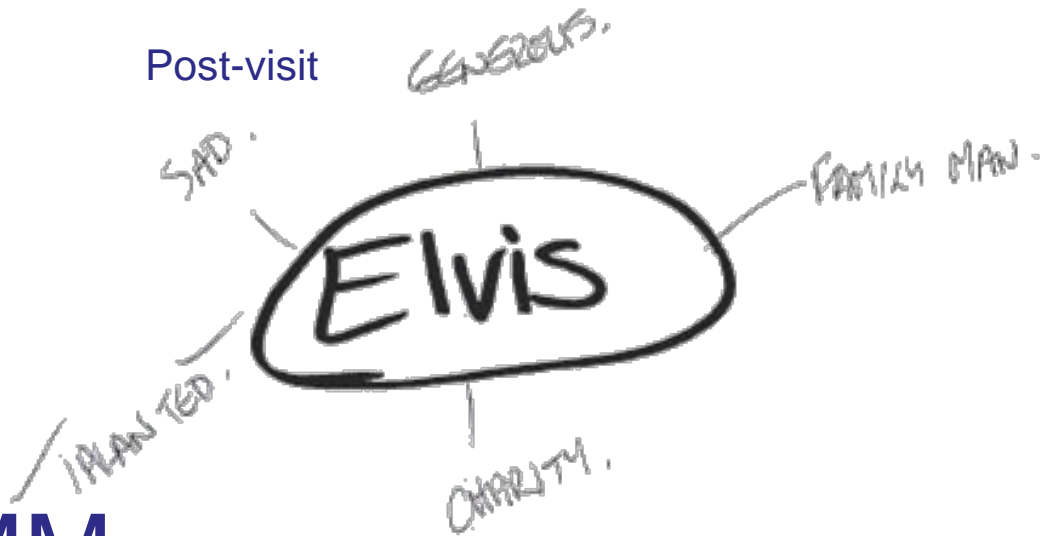
170 random visitors represented

- **75% U.S.** (28 states), **25% International** (10 countries)
- **86% are first time visitors**
- **Only 18% are traveling with Graceland as their main destination** (contradicting pilgrimage literature)
- **70% consider themselves Elvis fans**
- **72% visit other historic homes**
- **61% are under the age of 50** (born after 1957)

Pre-visit



Post-visit



Sample PMM

ELVIS

Good entertainer

Loyal citizen served in army

loving son

Good singer

All round nice guy

ELVIS

Great entertainer

Modest person

Good son honoured his parents

Loyal US citizen - served in army

Good singer with own style

Religious

Gave generously to charity

Home is very liberable - not pretentious

#1:

**“Rock &
Roll”**

#6:

**Relate a
personal
memory**

#2:

“Music”

Elvis

*Pre-visit
Summary*

#5:

“Sexy”

#3:

**“The
King”**

#4:

“Movies”

#1:

“Generous”

#6:

“Life”

“Love”

#2:

“Family Man”

“Music”

Elvis

*Post-visit
Summary*

#5:

“Sadness”

#3:

“Man”

(excludes Family
Man, but
preceded by
adjective of some
sort)

#4:

“Humble”

Changing Perceptions

- Initial coding indicates that there are consistent shifts in pre and post visit responses.
- Examples:

	Pre-visit Frequency	Post-visit Frequency
Physical Appearance	43	3
Music	103	20
Personal Attribute	13	74

- Elvis is no longer the iconic King of Rock and Roll, but a humanised “real” person.

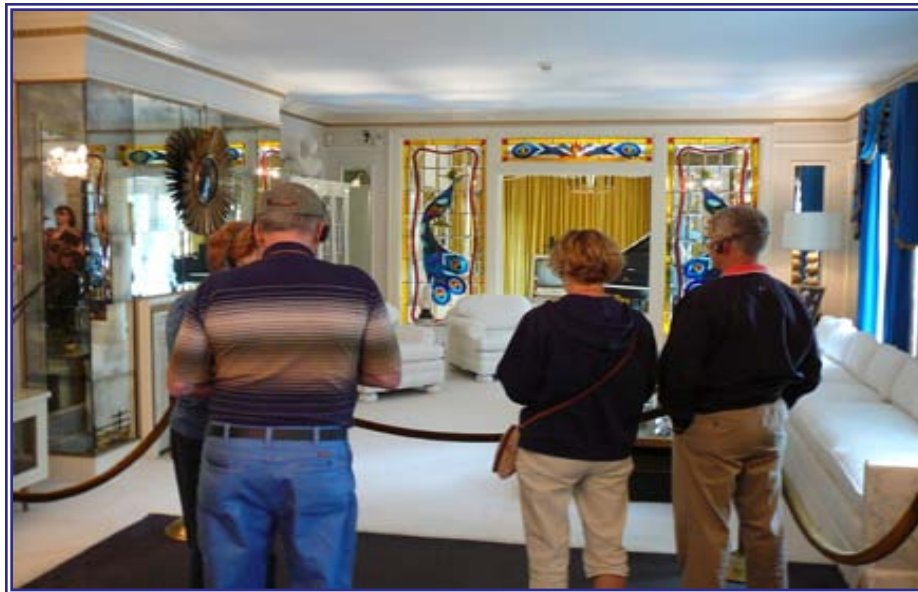
Analysing change . . .

Score Depth	1 No Change	2 Limited Change	3 Moderate Change	4 Substantial Change	5 Dramatic Change
Description	No change between hierarchies or concepts	Change in perception or elaboration of same concept	Change to similar hierarchy concept	Change between two tiers of concepts. At least one pre-visit concept may be represented.	Change from lower level concept to higher-level concept, with no pre-visit concepts repeated.

Depth Score	Percentage of Visitor Response
1 \$ No Change	10%
2 \$ Limited Change	10%
3 \$ Moderate Change	21%
4 \$ Substantial Change	27%
5 \$ Dramatic Change	32%

The greater the change the better the experience . . .

Depth Score	Percent of Visitors with Exceeded Expectations
1 \$ No Change	29%
2 \$ Limited Change	21%
3 \$ Moderate Change	38%
4 \$ Substantial Change	54%
5 \$ Dramatic Change	62%



The Interpretive Use of Media

- **Media at Graceland:**
Music, Oral Histories,
Contextual video

“My father was always singing songs, playing the piano or guitar or listening to music . . .”

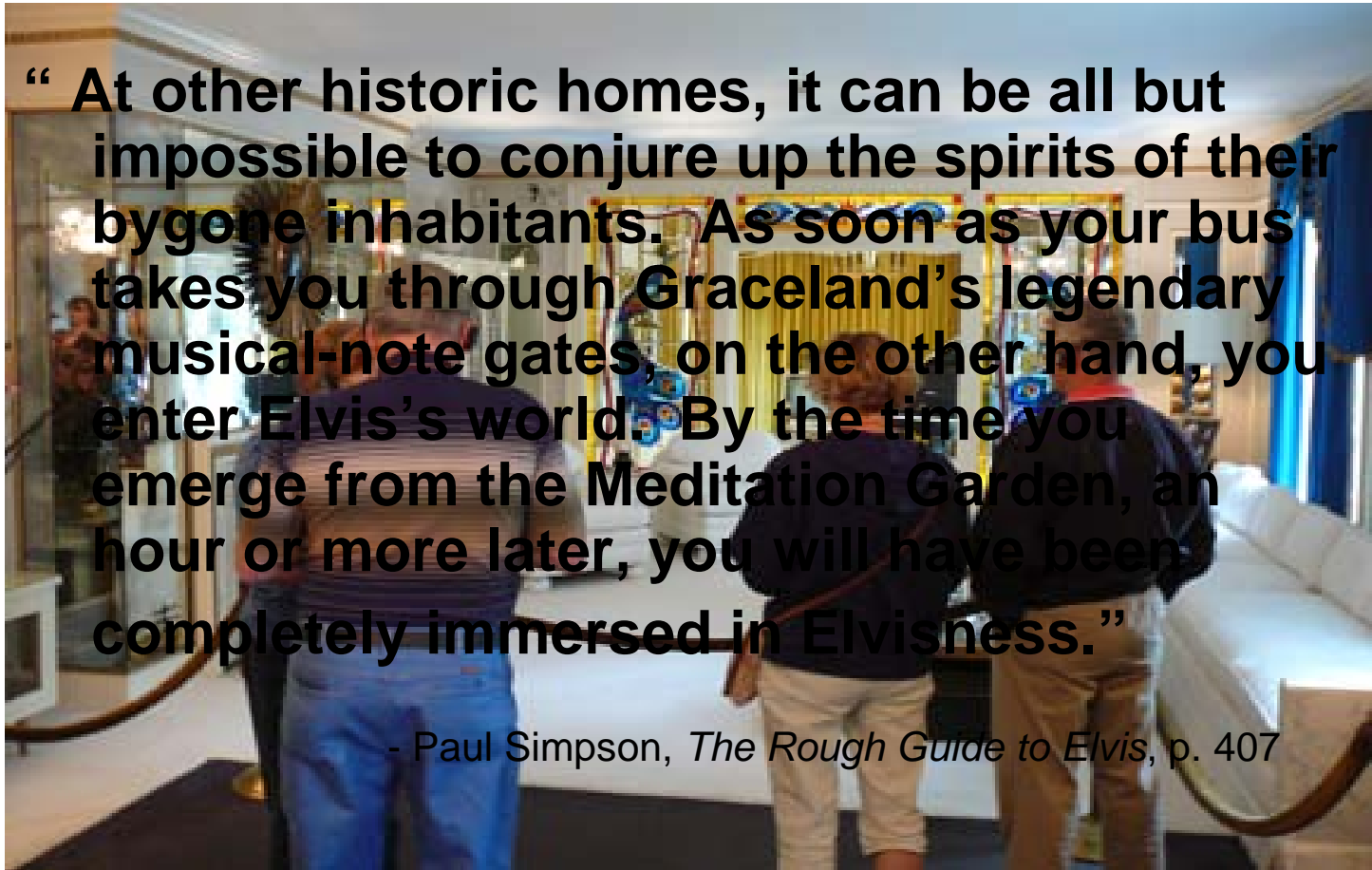
Lisa Marie Presley

- Media serves as a form of interpretive **“Animation”** - “because to animate is to give life, to vivify.” (Tilden, 1957)
- “Houses appeal partly to the **emotions**, and this – their power for museum purposes – deserves to be strengthened by developing atmosphere. . . [Visitors] enjoy being there because the place is like a home and not an institution . . . **Historic houses must be made to live again.**” (Coleman, 1933)

The Interpretive Experience

“ At other historic homes, it can be all but impossible to conjure up the spirits of their bygone inhabitants. As soon as your bus takes you through Graceland’s legendary musical-note gates, on the other hand, you enter Elvis’s world. By the time you emerge from the Meditation Garden, an hour or more later, you will have been completely immersed in Elvisness.”

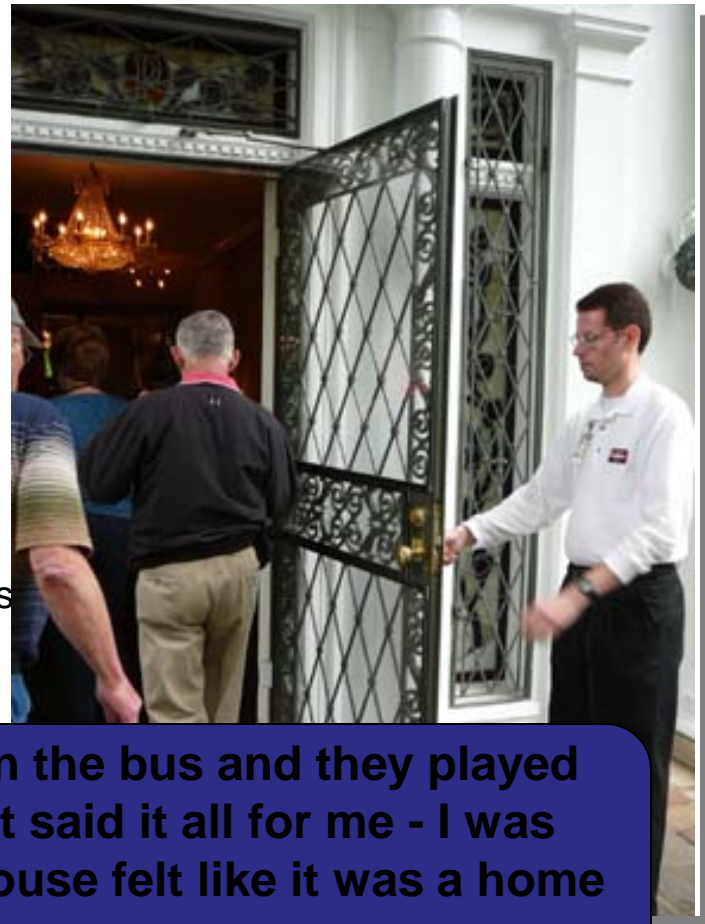
- Paul Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Elvis*, p. 407



The Power of Music

- Music is used in 3 primary ways: atmosphere, context and emotion
- Audio tour integrates these elements throughout, visitors often comment the music is the best part of the tour.
- Hearing songs and lyrics can help identify and express feelings. (Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998)
- “Music has an extraordinary ability to evoke powerful emotions.”
- “Many people experience a particularly intense, euphoric response to music which, because of its frequent accompaniment by an autonomic or psychophysiological component, is sometimes described as ‘shivers-down-the-spine’ or ‘chills’ . . .” (Blood and Zatorre, 1999 & 2001)

Atmosphere: “Welcome to My World”



a
press
ure.

“When we entered Graceland on the bus and they played WELCOME TO MY WORLD that said it all for me - I was entering HIS world at last. The house felt like it was a home not just a house. . .” *noggy29, Trip Advisor reviewer*

Context: “You’re about to see the Jungle Room”

“I LOVED the jungle room the best. The big round chair in the corner it looked so comfy and cozy. Just the stories and the songs. Kinda brought tears to my eyes.”

Millerlitechic79, Trip Advisor

Reviewer

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

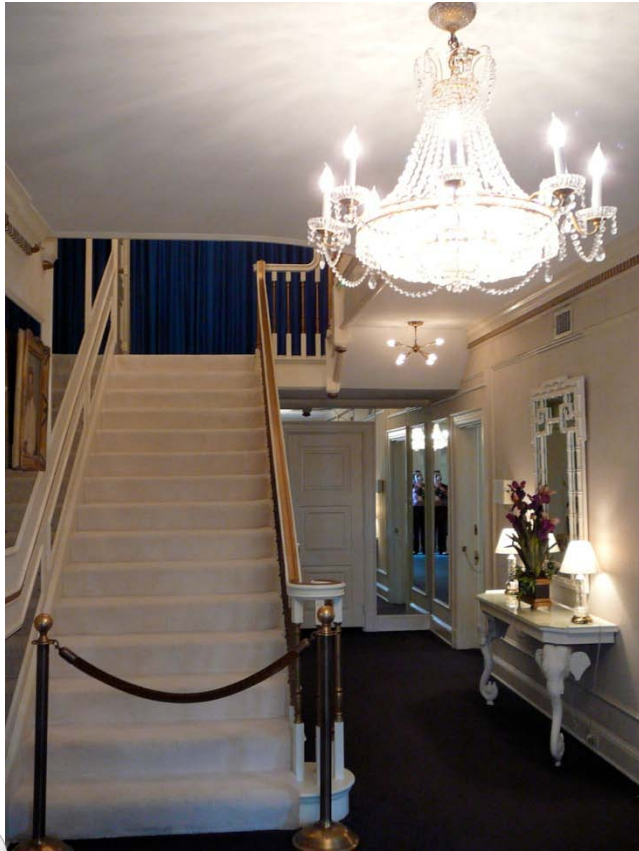
QuickTime™ and a
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Emotion: “Bridge Over Troubled Water”



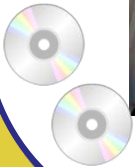
Oral histories



He would rattle down the steps . . . He had an awesome presence - even if he was upstairs you could feel him.

- Lisa Marie

The kitchen was grand central . . . Food was available all the time and cooks were on call because everyone was up all hours. The TV at the end of the kitchen was always on.” Lisa Marie



Contextual media



A Perfect Storm



Despite the Elvis Factor

- Interpret historic homes through lived experience
- Use of media can provide a rich atmospheric experience that helps create a personal narrative
- Personal narrative involves emotion, which has an impact on visitors
- Music is a key tool for tapping visitor emotion

“As long as a man has the strength to dream, He can redeem his soul and fly . . .”

